

TOWN OF ACTON  
WASTEWATER ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD TASKFORCE  
(WANT)

MINUTES  
December 7 2010  
7:00 p.m.  
Council On Aging Facility

WANT members present: Janet Adachi, Michael Geis, Peter Mosbach, and Kent Sharp  
Absent: Brett Murphy and Mark Tawa  
Town Staff: Doug Halley  
Citizens Al English and Diane Schaumburg,

*Peter* called the meeting to order 7:20 pm

**Citizens Concerns:**

*Al English*; Some members of the WANT committee have missed more than 10 meetings. How can they make informed decisions if they do not come to the meetings?

*Doug* said that Bill McNinnis told him that since the WANT committee has changed from environmental to money concerns, he believes that others can better address money problems. He would be available as a consultant and will not vote in the future.

*Al English* asked for a straw vote as to recommendations for septic or sewers.

*Peter* asked that such a vote be delayed until all the financial variations are addressed. He believed that sewers might be more financially favorable if the hookup was delayed after the sewer pipe was installed.

**Committee:**

Detailed minutes by Janet for Nov. 2, 2010 were read and accepted as amended.

*Peter* said he would not be present for the next scheduled WANT meeting, Dec. 21, 2010. It was decided to have the next meeting Jan. 4, 2011.

*Kent* passed out several tables and discussed the several ways to calculate supersizing costs. Tables attached.

*Janet* said that one Selectman was concerned about giving away the sewer capacity and not having it when other neighborhoods may need it.

*Al English* said that John Murray thinks supersizing should be paid for by users, and that it was not clear whether Mr. Murray accounted for the W.R. Grace betterments in his numbers. Mr. English said that how to account for supersizing is critical before the Committee can go forward, especially if it plans to have neighborhood meetings. He

asked that the supersizing costs be determined it could make a difference on deciding between septic and sewer.

*Kent* asked how much in-filling capacity is there without extending the sewer.

*Doug* said the calculation is not easy. There are properties with development potential, for example, that could be divided into several lots, that are not charged for the additional lots that do not yet exist. The committed capacity is 200,000 maximum, if one assumes all properties at capacity without excess, which leaves 90,000 available. Sewer usage is 82 % of what is expected for the SBU (sewer betterment units) already connected.

In response to a question from *Kent*, *Doug* said that neither the location of piping nor its size alters the capability of piping to handle flow. All the sewer pipes have the ability to accommodate the sewer unused capacity.

We have 1666 SBUs, of which 76 % are connected, and encompass 589 sewer bills + schools.

*Peter* suggested that the Committee account in the cost-matrix for the scenario where people with septic systems delay hooking up until they move or their systems fail.

*Mike*: John Murray said the sewer rate is increasing, > 5 % annually, because those connected are using less water. With a fixed cost the cost/gal has to increase. Some of the sewer users may pay less, even with the sewer rate increase.

However, looking at slide 3 from “West Acton Sewer Extension Project: Feasibility Study” 2008 (see web site: <http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=59>) the water usage per SBU (total sewer influent/number of SBUs) superficially appears to slightly increase (over the years 2004 to 2008), but the sewer rate still increase by >5% annually. Does the water usage as measured by the Acton Water District correlate with the actual sewer influent?

*Doug* said for most of the time the influent and the reported water usage by the Acton Water District are equal within ~ 5000 out of >100,000 gallons. With the exception of periods of high rainfall, like this summer, when storm water ends up in the sewer, perhaps through inappropriate use of the sewer for sump pump out flow.

*Al English* argued that the supersizing cost should be lower for low pressure SBUs because of the additional cost of the low-pressure sewers. The extra low pressure SBUs on the sewer will lower the sewer rate for everyone. The estimated sewer rate for S-T-F is ~ \$80/month.

When considering the overall cost *Kent* point out the possibility of replacing two septic within a 31 year period. *Diane Schaumburg* asked if the third septic system replacement would cost more?

No one had an answer.

*Al English*: Who is going to pay if the sewer needs an upgrade? For example if pharmaceuticals have to be removed from the sewer effluent. Some reserve monies are taken from the sewer charges. In addition a significant reserve is obtained from premature

betterment pay off, but all these monies will eventually be required for interest and loan payment.

*Diane Schaumburg* asked if the sewer has new pharmaceuticals requirements, would septic have the same? *Mike* said that sewers and septic systems treat pharmaceuticals so differently that it is not obvious there would be any correlation.

*Al English* asked if supersizing charges could be postponed.  
*Kent* said that those monies are necessary to cover expenses.

*Kent* said that the Committee would need input from the Selectmen/Sewer Commissioners about the specific number for privilege fees, etc. Committee members agreed that the Committee should present the request to the Selectmen directly rather than through Janet. *Janet* said that the Selectmen need to get up to speed before any consideration of betterment and supersizing expenses.

*Doug* requested that Committee members take the presentations to WANT and write up a “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) summary based on the presentation. The following are the subject presentations and the person that has been assigned to complete the FAQ:

10/20/2009	Matt Mostoller – Water District	Mike
2/2/2010	Brent Reagor – Title 5	Peter
2/16/2010	Pio Lombardo – CWRMP	Brett
3/16/2010	Doug Halley – I/A Systems	Doug
5/4/2010	John Murray – Financial & Operational Costs	Kent
5/18/2010	John Parkhurst – Tour of Wastewater Treatment Plant	Doug
8/17/2010	Al English – Sewer Proposal Presentation	Al
9/21/2010	Ron Beck – Wastewater Management Districts	Janet
11/2/2010	John Murray – Finance Presentation	Janet
11/2/2010	Mike Geis – Pollution And Money	Mike
11/16/2010	Al English – Sewer Proposal Presentation II	Al

*Doug* said that the sewer was designed to help the needs areas.

*Mike*: The sewer might be used to sponsor condos and development along the sewer areas in town. When a condo hooks up it immediately pays the betterment and supersizing. Such development is especially desirable near the train station. Surely some one has already considered this?

*Al English* believes that cost reduction is required for sewerage in our area.

*Doug* discussed the Selectmen’s draft response to the Water Infrastructure Finance Committee, chaired by Senator Jamie Eldridge, which has requested comments about

local infrastructure issues. Infrastructure includes individual systems, and not just large systems. The draft addresses the need for financing, which the Committee has recognized in its discussions. *Doug* referred to the draft NPDES permit, which is an unfunded mandate requiring compliance with new stormwater standards. The regulations are coming from the EPA instead of the DEP, and do not take in to consideration the limitations of different regions. For example they require cleaning the streets twice a year. One cleaning required in October could have the additional complication of snow. Storm water in- and out-flows are to be monitored for 12 different parameters and Acton has between 130 to 140 storm sewers requiring this monitoring. Already the BoH reporting takes significant time and the additional reporting is burdensome with no additional funding. Committee members may provide comments to Doug who will forward to the Selectmen. For example, that state revolving funds be available for people needing financial assistance with septic systems, as well as sewerage.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45

Respectfully submitted  
Michael Geis